

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. CANTOR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CANTOR. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland, the majority leader, for the purpose of announcing next week's schedule.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend, the Republican whip, for yielding.

On Monday, the House is not in session. Monday is the Federal holiday to celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. I might observe, as I am sure all the Members know, that today is in fact Martin Luther King's birthday, January 15. Extraordinary life. His bust is in the Rotunda. It is a real honor to be able to honor his birth and his message and his vision on Monday.

This is a particularly auspicious recognition of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. How proud he would be to know that the day after we recognize his birth and his message and his contribution to our country, we will inaugurate the 44th President of the United States of America, an African American; a statement that the dream, although not clearly still fully recognized, nevertheless is a dream shared by all of America.

On Wednesday, Madam Speaker, the House will meet at 12 p.m. for legislative business with votes no earlier than 3 p.m. Let me reiterate that. We will be meeting on Wednesday at 12 p.m., with votes not expected before 3 p.m. Obviously, with the inaugural day, we don't want to have people have to come in too early, not necessarily because of anything they may be doing the night before, but because of scheduling they may or may not be here the night before.

On Thursday, the House will meet at 10 a.m. for legislative business. On Friday, no votes are expected.

We will consider several bills under suspension of the rules. A complete list of suspension bills will be announced by the close of business tomorrow.

In addition, Madam Speaker, we will complete consideration of H.R. 384, the bill we were just considering, the TARP Reform and Accountability Act, we expect to complete. We also expect to consider a privileged resolution relating to the disapproval of the obligations under the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman, Madam Speaker.

And I would like to bring the gentleman back to a conversation that we had last week regarding the SCHIP bill. Because, frankly, Madam Speaker, I'm a little bit concerned that the Democrat majority is not fulfilling President-elect Obama's calls for bipartisanship. Because I would say to the gentleman, last week you told the House that you were working towards having the SCHIP bill available to us for a full 48 hours before bringing it to the floor; and as the gentleman knows, that did not happen.

And I know the American people are not concerned about the process here

in this House, but I do know that the public wants their Congress to function openly. This truly is about bipartisanship and transparency, and I believe that the American people deserve both.

And as we discussed, Madam Speaker, last week, there are 55 new Members of this House. Those 55 new Members had less than 24 hours to review a 285-page bill that spent \$72 billion in American taxpayer dollars, and none of these Members were even allowed to offer an amendment.

So I would like to ask the majority leader if he would commit to allowing at least 48 hours for Members and the American public to review bills prior to a vote in the House.

Mr. HOYER. If the gentleman will yield?

Mr. CANTOR. I yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding and I appreciate his observation.

I did say we were going to try to give 48 hours. I may have said we were going to give 48 hours, but we did not give 48 hours, the gentleman is correct. The gentleman probably knows the reason we didn't give 48 hours is because we hadn't gotten a CBO scoring, so we were unable to finalize the bill until we got that scoring. We did give approximately 24 hours.

But I say to the gentleman, with all due respect, yes, it was a lengthy bill, but of course the bill had been passed almost in exactly the same form either in the CHAMP bill or in the SCHIP bill itself, so that clearly the overwhelming majority of the text of the bill and the provisions of the bill have been available essentially for over a year.

But having said that, I want you to know and I want to reiterate my intention to give the maximum amount of notice; 48 hours I think is clearly a target that we want to set. I don't want to make a commitment that we will not bring a bill without 48 hours notice. The gentleman, if you would confer with your predecessor—his predecessors, I would say—sometimes it's very difficult to do that.

But the gentleman is absolutely correct, not only new Members, but all Members are certainly entitled to have the respect for their view and their opportunity to represent their constituents, to have appropriate notice, and we will certainly strive for that. I've reiterated to the committee Chairs and to our leadership that I want to follow regular order to the extent possible. And when I say the extent possible, we're in extraordinary times. This did not necessarily relate to the SCHIP bill, other than we had clearly considered that twice, had it voted upon numerous times in this House, and the overwhelming majority, I don't know the percentage, but I would say 95 percent of the bill was exactly as we had passed it in either the CHAMP bill or the SCHIP bill. But I am aware of the gentleman's concerns, and I want to tell him I share his concerns, and we will be working toward the end that he seeks to achieve.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman for that.

Madam Speaker, I would also ask the gentleman if he would commit to allowing both Republicans and Democrats the ability to offer amendments on a regular basis, especially as, in this instance, when a bill comes to the floor without committee consideration.

Mr. HOYER. I understand the gentleman's concern. As you know, we are now considering a bill which has both Republican and Democratic amendments, very important bill, conditions for accountability and transparency and dealing with mortgage failures in the present bill that's on the floor. And certainly that will be my objective.

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Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman.

Madam Speaker, I would like to further inquire of the gentleman, along those lines, I know that we now are looking at next week, as you suggest, beginning the legislative process on the consideration of a stimulus bill. And I would note that two of the gentleman's chairmen, the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) and Mr. OBEY from the Appropriations Committee, have released summaries of the House Democratic economic recovery package. However, both gentlemen have not publicly released legislative texts. And I would say to the gentleman it is one thing for us to have a summary of the bill; it is another when we are contemplating spending \$825 billion of the taxpayers' money as to when the text of a reported stimulus bill could be made publicly available.

Mr. HOYER. I would hope and expect the text to be available by the end of business tomorrow. I'm very hopeful that that will be the case.

Again, you understand the practical problems as they are now drafting all of the agreement. But we want it available, and hopefully the text will be available by the end of the week.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman.

Madam Speaker, I further say that the Appropriations Committee on the Republican side of the aisle are extremely concerned, and they should be, that they will not be given the customary 3 days to review the text prior to any markup, and this is, after all, the committee rule. Our members are being told that today, Friday, and next Tuesday will count as the 3 days required under the committee rules; however, as we all know, on Tuesday almost no one will be allowed in the building due to the inauguration.

So, Madam Speaker, I ask the gentleman from Maryland, the majority leader, in his capacity as the leader and a former appropriator, can he ensure us and ensure the members of the Appropriations Committee that their markup will not begin before next Thursday?

Mr. HOYER. I cannot give the gentleman that assurance given the time frame that Mr. OBEY is on. Obviously, as you know, the President and I think

in a bipartisan way this administration, without reference to the specific stimulus package or recovery and reinvestment package that we're talking about, believes that we need to act with dispatch. We need to act carefully. We need to act correctly. But we also need to act with dispatch.

I have just been told, by the way, that the text of the bill is online as we speak. So what I was going to say is that we need to act with dispatch, and as you can see, we're apparently doing that.

We have a crisis that confronts us. We have lost over 2.5 million jobs. We lost a million jobs in the last 2 months. People are hurting. We have and I know of you have a sense of urgency. We have worked with this administration to try to respond to the economic crisis that confronts us. Very frankly, Democrats worked in a very bipartisan way and a very supportive way with this President and the Secretary of Treasury in trying to respond to this crisis. As a matter of fact, I would suggest that Democrats were more responsive to the President's request and Secretary Paulson's request than some Members of his own party.

But that aside, we believe we need to act, as I said, with dispatch. We are doing that. I'm glad that this is online because now the committee will have Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Clearly while one may not be able to get into the Capitol, although I would be surprised if the Appropriations staff could not get in the Capitol, and I don't want to adopt that premise because I don't know that to be the case, but in any event, the text will be obviously available to anybody all over the country to look at, to comment on, and to be prepared to act on at the appropriate time. In addition to that, every Member now will have at least 1½ weeks to review the text of this before it comes to the floor.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman for his remarks. I know that it's not customary for us to count holidays and weekends in those 3 days, but I do thank the gentleman for the intent of his remarks.

I would like to turn, Madam Speaker, to the issue of committee ratios. And I do know that there has been some progress made on the Energy and Commerce Committee. Essentially, Madam Speaker, my question to the gentleman is the ratio on the floor of the House is 59/41. And I am, as a member of the Ways and Means Committee, particularly puzzled how there is any justification for a ratio particularly on that committee where it is 63/37. And if he could allow me some insight as to how a ratio could be that different and what the reason for that would be.

Mr. HOYER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CANTOR. Yes, I yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I didn't know you were going to ask that question; so I don't

have the specific facts in front of me. But it is my belief that the Ways and Means Committee has historically had a ratio, when your side of the aisle was in charge and my side of the aisle has been in charge, that did not reflect the exact ratio of the House. That's also true on a couple of other committees as well.

Generally speaking, however, in the discussions between Speaker PELOSI and Leader BOEHNER, the ratios were within a point or 2, I think, of the existing ratio. I know that we recently accommodated a request from the leader, from your leader, on the Energy and Commerce Committee, which I thought was appropriate for us to do. But I think, generally speaking, it reflects pretty closely the ratios between the parties in the House. But I think if you will look historically, and again I regret that I did not look it up, but I think historically the Ways and Means Committee has generally reflected a greater majority membership than the specific ratio of the parties on the floor of the House.

Mr. CANTOR. And I do say to the gentleman we appreciate the gesture on the part of the Speaker working with our leader to accommodate this disparity in the ratio on the Energy and Commerce Committee and hopefully in that spirit can continue to work together to try to slim down that disparity on the other committees in which it does exist.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, I would like to clarify what action the House will be taking next week on the bailout funds. As the majority leader has stated, he expects the House to vote on a resolution of disapproval. More plainly, for all the people of this country, this is a bill to block the remaining \$350 billion in bailout funds from being spent.

So to clarify again, Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman to respond to the statement that voting "yes" would block the bailout funds and voting "no" would allow the bailout funds to continue to be spent; is that correct?

Mr. HOYER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CANTOR. I yield.

Mr. HOYER. The gentleman is correct. In the legislation which was passed pursuant to the request of President Bush and Secretary Paulson authorizing the TARP, they had asked for, as you know, \$700 billion in one lump sum. We believe, the majority on both sides of the aisle believe, that that ought to be at least in two tranches, two segments of \$350 billion. The legislation provided that for the second tranche to go forward, the President would have to ask for it. President Bush has now asked for that \$350 billion, and that the Congress would have immediately before it within 3 days the introduction of a resolution of disapproval of the request and that that would have to be considered. Any Member 6 days thereafter could ask that that resolution be brought to the floor. Now, in this case 6 days

thereafter would have been Sunday; so that would have been not appropriate or practical; so we put, as you know, in the rule the ability of the majority leader to call it up next week.

The legislation does not provide for the issue becoming moot. Now, what I mean by that is I don't know whether the Senate has voted—they may vote tomorrow. They obviously began procedurally on their resolution of disapproval today. If that resolution is not passed, then our action would be essentially without meaning but not necessarily without importance to the Members who want to vote on it, so that sometime next week, Wednesday or Thursday, my expectation is that we have Members who will want to vote on it. I will be discussing it with your side. I will discuss it with you and discuss it with our side bringing that to a vote, notwithstanding the fact that the Senate may make such a vote not a meaningful act in that President Bush's request would have already been sanctioned because both Houses need to disapprove and if the Senate didn't disapprove, our action will not effect a disapproval.

Mr. CANTOR. So I ask a follow-up, Madam Speaker, to the gentleman that the process for consideration of that resolution is yet to be determined?

Mr. HOYER. My expectation is we're going to have it on the floor next week. Members on both sides want to vote on it, but as I said, it will not have any legal effect if the Senate defeats the resolution of disapproval.

Mr. CANTOR. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland, the majority leader.

--- HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 4 p.m. tomorrow; and further, that when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 20.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

--- TARP—AIG

(Mr. CROWLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, today, the House began consideration of legislation to strengthen the Troubled Assets Relief Program. Implementation of this legislation is urgently needed, and here's why:

Just last week AIG pulled back on a plan that would have cost taxpayers \$93 million. What prompted AIG to cancel its proposal? Three phone calls, none of which came from the Bush administration. They came from myself and Congressman PAUL KANJORSKI of Pennsylvania. AIG is just one example.